

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KINGST 04337 01 OF 02 301650Z
ACTION ARA-14

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1438
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
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AMEMBASSY NASSAU
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 KINGSTON 4337

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, SHUM, JM
SUBJECT: DECREASE IN VIOLENT CRIMES IN JAMAICA; FOR HOW LONG?

REFERENCE: KINGSTON 4073

1. SUMMARY. KINGSTON'S DAILY GLEANER RECENTLY REPORTED A SIGNIFICANT DROP IN CRIMES OF VIOLENCE DURING THE FIRST FOUR MONTHS OF THIS YEAR. ALTHOUGH THE PAPER IS ANTI-GOVERNMENT, THE GLEANER EDITORIALISTS ATTRIBUTED THE CHANGE TO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF POLICIES PURSUED BY MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY DUDLEY THOMPSON. DESPITE SOME ENCOURAGING SIGNS THAT THE IMPROVEMENT COULD CONTINUE, THE GOVERNMENT IS COUNTING ON THE READINESS OF ITS SECURITY FORCES TO MAINTAIN ORDER IN THE DIFFICULT CRISIS PERIOD AHEAD AS LIVING STANDARDS DECLINE, UNEMPLOYMENT GROWS AND MANY BECOME EVEN MORE DESPERATE IN THEIR EFFORTS TO GAIN THEIR LIVELIHOOD. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING THE LAST FIVE YEARS CRIMES OF VIOLENCE AND REPORTS
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PAGE 02 KINGST 04337 01 OF 02 301650Z

OF SUCH CRIMES HAVE DONE CRITICAL DAMAGE TO JAMAICA. THE IMAGE OF POLITICIANS OF BOTH PARTIES (WHO ARE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR ARMING GUNMEN) AND THE IMAGE OF THE GOVERNMENT, WHICH HAS APPEARED TO BE UNABLE TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE PROTECTION FOR THE PEOPLE, HAVE SUFFERED. REPORTS OF CRIME IN THE FOREIGN PRESS, SOME TRUE, SOME EXAGGERATED, HAVE HAD A STRONG NEGATIVE IMPACT ON TOURISM, ONE OF

JAMAICA'S PRINCIPAL FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNERS, AND FOREIGN INVESTMENT. IT HAS ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO THE EMIGRATION OF MANY SKILLED PEOPLE.

3. NOW, FOR THE FIRST FOUR MONTHS OF THE CURRENT CALENDAR YEAR, SOME STATISTICS INDICATE A CONSIDERABLE DECREASE IN VIOLENT CRIME. ACCORDING TO THE DAILY GLEANER, AN INDEPENDENT PAPER USUALLY SEVERELY CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT, THE NUMBER OF DEATHS BY VIOLENCE HAS GONE FROM 50 IN JANUARY (14 KILLED BY GUNMEN, 28 BY SECURITY FORCES, 8 OTHERS) TO 38 IN FEBRUARY, 23 IN MARCH, AND 21 IN APRIL (7 BY GUNMEN, 9 BY SECURITY FORCES, 5 BY STABBING). THE GLEANER DID NOT CITE ITS SOURCE. IN THE PAST THREE WEEKS THE POLICE HAVE FOUND AND KILLED TWO OF THE MOST WANTED CRIMINALS IN JAMAICA. ON ITS EDITORIAL PAGE THE GLEANER GIVES CONSIDERABLE CREDIT FOR THESE DEVELOPMENTS TO MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY DUDLEY THOMPSON AND THE SECURITY FORCES WHO THE GLEANER SAID HAVE SUCCESSFULLY MOBILIZED THE COMMUNITY AGAINST CRIMINALS.

4. WHEN HE BECAME MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY IN JANUARY OF THIS YEAR, SENATOR THOMPSON ADOPTED A POLICY OF TALKING TOUGH AND MOVING AGAINST THE GUNMEN WITH ALL DELIBERATE SPEED WHILE ENCOURAGING LAW ABIDING CITIZENS TO COOPERATE WITH THE POLICE AND TURN IN WEAPONS HELD ILLEGALLY. SECURITY FORCES WERE INSTRUCTED TO SHOOT WHENEVER THEY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 KINGST 04337 01 OF 02 301650Z

ENCOUNTERED SUSPECTS ARMED WITH GUNS OR KNIVES. THOMPSON HIMSELF HAS MADE FREQUENT APPEALS FOR THE GUNMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES TO TURN IN THEIR WEAPONS AND HAS DENOUNCED THE GUNMEN AS "MAD DOGS". THIS HAS STRUCK A SYMPATHETIC CHORD IN MANY OF THE POPULACE WHO BELIEVE THAT IN THE PRESENT CONTEXT THE NUMBER ONE PRIORITY IS TO PROTECT THE INNOCENT FROM THE GUNMEN. THEY EVIDENTLY BELIEVE THE OUTLAWS WERE A GREATER THREAT TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE ORDINARY CITIZEN THAN WERE THE POLICE TO THE RIGHTS OF THE SUSPECTED OUTLAWS.

5. A BY-PRODUCT OF THIS INCREASED ACTIVITY ON THE PART OF THE SECURITY FORCES HAS BEEN THE DEATHS OF INNOCENT PERSONS. THE NUMBER OF ALLEGEDLY INNOCENT VICTIMS OF THE SECURITY FORCES HAS CAUSED ALARM AND CONCERN; MANY FEAR THE POLICE ALMOST AS MUCH AS THE GUNMEN. THE MINISTER IS CAUGHT BETWEEN RESPONDING TO STRONG DEMANDS FOR THE RESTORATION OF LAW AND ORDER IN CERTAIN AREAS OF KINGSTON, AS WELL AS THE NECESSITY FOR PROTECTING HIS SECURITY FORCES (WHO LOST 26 MEN TO GUNMEN IN CALENDAR YEAR 1977, AND WAITING UNTIL IT MAY BE TOO LATE TO CONFIRM THE SUSPECTED OUTLAWS' INTENTIONS. IN SOME AREAS THE GUNMEN HAVE

ADOPTED A ROBIN HOOD LIFESTYLE, SHARE THEIR BOOTY WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS AND ARE PROTECTED FROM THE POLICE BY THESE NEIGHBORS.

6. THOMPSON'S BIG TEST IS YET TO COME. THE GOVERNMENT'S AUSTERITY PROGRAM (REFTEL) CALLS FOR A REDUCTION IN THE STANDARD OF LIVING FOR ALL JAMAICANS. AT LEAST IN THE EARLY MONTHS OF THIS PROGRAM MORE PEOPLE WILL PROBABLY BE UNEMPLOYED, GOODS WILL BECOME EVEN MORE SCARCE AND CRIME CAN ONLY BE EXPECTED TO RISE. THE GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO BE READY TO REACT TO THIS, WHAT IT HOPES WILL BE A TEMPORARY CRISIS, BY STIMULATING EXPORT INDUSTRIES TO CREATE JOBS, MOBILIZING THE SECURITY FORCES AND ABROGATING THE RIGHT TO ASSEMBLY AND PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION. ON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 KINGST 04337 01 OF 02 301650Z

MAY 18 MINISTER THOMPSON IMPOSED A SECOND ISLAND-WIDE BAN ON PUBLIC MEETINGS AND MARCHES UNDER TERMS OF THE PUBLIC ORDER ACT. EACH SUCH ORDER IS VALID UNDER THE LAW FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED ONE MONTH.

7. WHILE VIOLENT CRIME MAY HAVE DECREASED IN THE FIRST FOUR MONTHS OF THE YEAR, GREATER CIVIC DISCIPLINE, A CLEARLY OBSERVABLE EQUITABLE SHARING OF ANTICIPATED HARD-SHIPS, JOB CREATION AND GREATER TRUST IN THE SECURITY FORCES WILL BE REQUIRED IN THE COMING MONTHS IF THE DECREASE IN SUCH CRIMES IS TO CONTINUE. GOVERNMENT POLICIES HAVE TAKEN THESE REQUIREMENTS INTO CONSIDERATION.

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PAGE 01 KINGST 04337 02 OF 02 262127Z POSS DUPE ACTION ARA-14

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 KINGSTON 4337

THERE ARE ENCOURAGING SIGNS. SENATOR THOMPSON AND JLP SENATOR WINSTON SPAULDING HAVE ISSUED A BIPARTISAN CALL FOR CITIZEN SUPPORT OF THE POLICE. THE WEST KINGSTON TRUCE IS HOLDING. MANY GUNMEN, PARTICULARLY IN THE TRUCE AREAS, SEEM TO BE CONVINCED THEY WERE DUPED BY THE POLITICIANS AND ARE TRYING TO CHANGE THEIR LIFESTYLE. SUPPORT, SUCH AS OUR TITLE II PROGRAM FOR THE AREA WILL BE NEEDED, AND IN THE MEDIUMTERM SOME HOPE FOR GAIN FUL EMPLOYMENT IS ESSENTIAL TO KEEP CRIMES OF ALL KINDS FROM RISING AGAIN. ANOTHER ENCOURAGING FACTOR IS THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOW TOLD THE PEOPLE IN DIRECT TERMS THAT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IS BAD AND WILL GET WORSE BEFORE IT GETS BETTER. THIS HAS HAD CERTAINLY A DEPRESSING EFFECT IN ONE SENSE. BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, TRUTHFULNESS ON THE PART OF THE GOVERNMENT HAS EARNED THEM GREATER CONFIDENCE.

8. MEANWHILE, THE GOVERNMENT IS BATTENING DOWN THE HATCHES WITH ITS SECURITY FORCES AND ITS ACTIVIST CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE GUNMEN. A CONSENSUS, INCLUDING THE HIGHLY CRITICAL
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PAGE 02 KINGST 04337 02 OF 02 262127Z POSS DUPE

PRESS, HAS CLEARLY DEVELOPED IN SUPPORT OF THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY'S PROGRAM OF PROTECTING THE INNOCENT BY ELIMINATING THE OUTLAW, BY FORCE IF NECESSARY. HOWEVER, MORE WILL HAVE TO BE DONE TO PROTECT THE INNOCENT VICTIM FROM POLICE ENTHUSIASM IF THE GOVERNMENT IS TO REALIZE MORE, IF NOT MOST, OF THE CITIZEN SUPPORT. THE GREEN BAY AFFAIR (KINGSTON 3605), OF COURSE, HAS FURTHER UNDERMINED THE PEOPLE'S CONFIDENCE IN THE INTEGRITY OF THE SECURITY FORCES.
HAVERKAMP

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